

Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4065

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SUBJ: SHUM, UR, SY

SUBJ: SYRIAN REACTION TO SOVIET TRIALS

REF: STATE 178559

1. AL-BAATH JULY 11 REPORTED TRIALS OF GINSBURG AND
SHCHARANSKY DRAWING ON TASS HANDOUTS. REPORT WAS WHAT ONE WOULD
EXPECT COMING FROM TASS, LEADING PARA REFLECTED TONE OF REPORT:

"THE TRIAL OF TWO MOST DANGEROUS SPIES WHO WORKED FOR THE CIA
AND COLLABORATED DIRECTLY WITH ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE Began in
MOSCOW YESTERDAY." ON JULY 12 TISHRIIN CARRIED AN EDITORIAL
TITLED: "HUMANIT--FOR SAKE OF ZIONISM ONLY." AFTER
NOTING THAT THE JEWISH DISSIDENTS ARE HOSTILE TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY
AND THAT IT IS NATURAL FOR A COUNTRY TO TRY INDIVIDUALS
WHO BREAK THE LAWS IN EFFECT IN THAT COUNTRY THE EDITORIAL
CONTINUES: "WE HAVE NO OBJECTION THAT THE WESTERN ORGANIZA-
TIONS, GOVERNMENTS, PARTIES, AND PERSONAGES EXPRESS THEIR
OPINIONS ABOUT THE TRIALS OF ZIONISTS IN THE SOVIET UNION
FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF INTEREST IN HUMANITY AND INTERNATIONAL
CHARTERS AND SON ON. WHAT SURPRISES US IS THAT THE GREAT
ENTHUSIASM WHICH IS BEING EVINced FOR ONE ZIONIST OR TWO
DIES OUT WHEN THE MATTER IS RELATED TO TEN THOUSANDS OF THE
ARABS WHO ARE DETAINED IN THE ZIONIST CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN
ISRAEL AND THE HUNDRED THOUSAND OF THE ARAB WHO ARE UNDER
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OCCUPATION AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE CRIME OF GENOCIDE, EVICTION
FROM HOMES, HOMELAND, CORPORAL AND MORAL TORTURE AND INJUST
TRIALS. WHY DON'T THE SUPPORTERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, DETENTE
AND THE HELSINKI AGREEMENTS FLY INTO RAGE WHEN ISRAEL
DENIES THE NATIONAL RIGHTS OF A WHOLE PEOPLE...IS WESTERN
HUMANITY EFFECTIVE IN ONE DIRECTION ONLY--ZIONISM? IS IT
NOT WORKABLE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE ARABS?..WHAT HUMANITY

IS THAT WHICH DOES NOT MOVE EXCEPT TO DEFEND TREACHERY AND ISRAELI AGGRESSION? THIS CANNOT BE HUMANITY."

2. DIRECTOR OF MFA AMERICA DIVISION PRIVATELY TOLD POLOFF HE WAS NONPLUSSED BY US REACTION TO TRIALS OF SHCHARANSKY, GINSBURG AND OTHERS. WHAT CRITERIA, HE WANTED TO KNOW, LET THE US TO ELEVATE THESE MEN INTO MARTYRS WHEN INJUSTICE PREVAILS THROUGHTOUT THE WOR)\$? IN IRAQ A NUMBER OF COMMUNISTS WERE RECENTLY HUNG FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY, HE POINTED OUT. THE EVIDENCE SEEMED NO MORE COMPELLING THAN THE EVIDENCE AGAINST THE SOVIET DISSIDENTS. THESE MEN LOST THEIR LIVES--THE SOVIETS LOST ONLY THEIR FREEDOM--AND YET THERE WAS NO WORD FROM THE US PRESIDENT. AFRICANS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND RHODESIA LOSE THEIR LIBERTY AND THEIR LIVES DAILY WITHOUT A WORD FORM THE US. PALESTINIANS ARE EXTERMINATED OR CONDEMNED TO EXILE BY ISRAELI AGGRESSION BUT THERE IS CERTAINLY NO US INCLINATION TO MAKE PALESTINIANS INTO MARYTRS. SIAGE SAID THAT THE US MEDIA HAVE COME CLOSE TO MAKING THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS INTO MARTYRS. THER WAS THE US ANGUISH, HOWEVER, WHEN SOUTH LEBANON WAS BEGIN PUMMELED OR EVEN TEL ZATAR, WHERE ADMITTEDLY SYRIA HAD A ROLE. SIAGE COMMENTED THAT PERHAPS WE COULD UNDERSTAND HIS CONFUSION OVER USG'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. APPARENTLY, ACCORDING TO SIAGE, ONE MUST BE JEWISH, MIDDLE CLASS, HAVE AN INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION, BE PRO-WEST, AND PREFERABLY ANTI-SOVIET TO GET A REACTION OUT OF THE US.

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3. COMMENT: SIAGE CLOSELY REFLECTED THE LINE TAKEN BY PUBLIC SYRIAN EDITORIALS ON THE SUBJECT, BUT HE WAS NOT BLINDLY REPEATING PROPAGANDA. HE SINCERELY BELIEVES THAT US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY IS SELECTIVE AND THAT ON THE SCALE OF INJUSTICE THERE ARE GREATER WRONGS COMMITTED THAN THE IMPRISONMENT OF A FEW SOVIET DISSIDENTS FOR EIGHT TO THIRTEEN YEARS. WE HAVE IN PAST EXPLAINED TO SIAGE AND OTHER SYRIANS THAT SOVIET ACTIONS ARE CLEAR VIOLATION OF HELSINKI ACCORDS AND AS SUCH MUST BE SINGLED OUT FOR CONDEMNATION. WE WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE THIS LINE WITH SYRIANS UNLESS DEPARTMENT PREFERS ANOTHER APPROACH.

PELLETREAU

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